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Thursday, 25 March 2004, 9.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wiltzer	(France)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Cross-border issues in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200)

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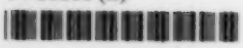

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Cross-border issues in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend invitations to the representatives of Ghana, Ireland and Japan to participate in the meeting without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo.

At the invitation of the President, Nana Akufo-Addo (Ghana) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and invited him to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Zéphirin Diabré to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa, document S/2004/200.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General and invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: I would like to welcome the Ministers who are present, including the French Minister Delegate for Cooperation and Francophonie, who is in the Chair, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana. I also welcome Mr. Chambas, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Mr. Wiltzer, it is very good to see you here and see you presiding over this meeting. I would also want to begin by saying to my compatriot Nana Akufo-Addo "akwaaba", which means "welcome".

ECOWAS has recently taken important initiatives to tackle the serious challenges to peace and security faced by the people of West Africa. As the Security Council has acknowledged, these initiatives have demonstrated the resolve of Africans to settle African problems in cooperation with the international community. This open debate is another significant step in the Council's efforts to promote a regional approach to those challenges, and yet another

illustration of the good working relationship between the Council and ECOWAS member States.

The report before the Council (S/2004/200) is the first one devoted specifically to cross-border problems in the subregion. The report's recommendations are practical. They have been grouped not in order of priority, but rather under broad thematic headings such as security-sector reform, disarmament, extortion, naming and shaming and the proliferation of small arms. They are not a shopping list for donors, but rather a call to action. As such, they are directed at a wide range of players, including the Security Council and other parts of the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral development partners, the ECOWAS secretariat, individual Member States in West Africa, civil society organizations and non-State actors such as suppliers of small arms and light weapons.

The overarching theme is that, if we want the region's problems to be dealt with in an effective and sustainable manner, these recommendations cannot be carried out solely on a country-by-country basis. Their implementation requires a multifaceted regional approach. At the same time, it is clear that certain issues have a particularly strong bearing on security and stability, without which no other progress will be possible. Special attention should therefore be paid to the proliferation of small arms, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the use of child soldiers and mercenaries, as well as to roadblocks, which greatly impede the movement of persons and goods in the subregion.

With this in mind, and to build on this report and meeting, I have asked my Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, who is here with us today, to convene a meeting in the region in the near future to explore how ECOWAS and the relevant United Nations entities can best move ahead. One important step forward has already been taken with the new arrangement whereby all my Special Representatives and Force Commanders in the subregion meet at regular intervals, under Mr. Ould-Abdallah's chairmanship. In the same context, Mr. Ould-Abdallah will also be doing more to promote synergies between United Nations peace operations and the Organization's humanitarian and development efforts.

The root causes of the region's problems — and indeed of the conflicts that spawn or exacerbate them — were beyond the report's scope. But as we all know, those root causes are linked above all to questions of governance, human rights and transparency. Regrettably, such abuses are all too prevalent in the region. Until they are addressed with real resolve, until there is a fundamental break with authoritarianism and the culture of violence, exclusion and impunity, I fear that whatever inroads we manage to make in handling cross-border problems will remain just that: temporary inroads, and fragile ones at best.

Therefore, I urge Governments of the region to build on the gains they have recently made and establish solidly democratic institutions and effective regional organizations. West Africa is blessed with a vibrant civil society that has wide-ranging experience in conflict prevention, peace-building and development. States must draw on their experience in addressing their problems. I also urge the international community to respond with all possible assistance, including politically.

Finally, for its part, the United Nations will continue its work and its efforts to work better as a team to support the wishes of the region's people and to strengthen cooperation with ECOWAS in pursuit of our shared goal of peace, stability and development. Let us all do our utmost to bring genuine change and hope into the lives of people throughout the region who are struggling to move beyond today's suffering and reach better days.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nana Akufo-Addo.

Nana Akufo-Addo: I must begin, in the name of the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and the leaders and peoples of the Community, by thanking the Secretary-General for the report before the Security Council (S/2004/200) and for the occasion it affords us to discuss before the Council the matters dominating the life of the Community.

This report attempts to analyse the problems of West Africa in all their manifold expressions, and

while not entirely perfect, it certainly provides much food for thought.

I would also like to thank the Security Council for the continuous efforts it has been making to find long-lasting solutions to the myriad of problems that have rocked West Africa and undermined peace, security and development there for the past two decades. The timeliness of this special meeting cannot be overemphasized, given the precarious security situation in our region, which has until recently been one of the most volatile and conflict-prone areas in the world.

The security situation in West Africa today, however, engenders both cautious optimism and justified concern. While there has been commendable progress — the ending of Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war and the holding of successful elections in that country in May 2002, as well as progress in other countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Mali and Senegal — continuing instability in other parts of the region threatens the peace of the area.

Conflict and misery in one State tend to spill over into the territories of its neighbours, due to the resultant problems of internally displaced persons and refugees and the transborder movement of guerrilla groups and mercenaries. The spill-over of instability in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, lately, Côte d'Ivoire has been a major source of concern for the leaders in the region.

Political turmoil and civil conflicts, and their potential for the rapid spread of instability within the region, have underlined the need for the development of a comprehensive approach which would focus, through a range of activities, on addressing the many interlinked root causes of these problems.

This understanding led to the adoption of a "declaration on a subregional approach to peace and security" by the heads of State and Government of member States at a meeting held in Abuja on 28 May 2003, in which the leaders of ECOWAS reaffirmed their determination to strengthen peace and stability in West Africa; reaffirmed the importance of a concerted regional approach to the resolution of the crises affecting the region and impeding integration efforts; re-energized their collective efforts to restore and preserve security in the region; reaffirmed their commitment to abide strictly by the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons and the provisions of the United Nations and Africa Union conventions on banning, recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries; and undertook to ban the recruitment and training of militias and irregular armed groups, reiterating their determination to take all measures to fight conscription and use of child soldiers and to demobilize them.

Furthermore, the leaders adopted certain key instruments to govern their conduct, which are fully set out in the printed version of my presentation.

While noting the report of the Secretary-General and the efforts that the United Nations system continues to make to help ECOWAS solve the problems of the region, we would like, with the Council's indulgence, to raise some concerns for the consideration of the Council.

Without wishing to sound in the least churlish, it is nonetheless somewhat disheartening to note that the United Nations Office for West Africa, which was set up to help the region deal with its problems, seems to have consulted more with national government organizations and civil society groups in preparing the report, and made no such effort to consult with member States or the ECOWAS secretariat. This is an anomaly which should not be repeated.

Relations between Liberia and the other members of the Mano River Union, namely, Guinea and Sierra Leone, have been very poor owing to suspicion and mistrust. With the war over in Sierra Leone and Liberia and democracy gradually being restored, ECOWAS is hopeful that the persistent suspicions between the leaders will be a thing of the past, to be replaced by understanding and goodwill.

The Secretary-General's recommendations for joint security patrols and common border management are, thus, laudable. As our borders are porous, any breach of the peace in a neighbouring country will open the uncontrollable floodgates of people and arms into other countries. Therefore, ECOWAS believes that the best solution is to find a way to restore peace to the entire region. Thus it is strongly recommended that we consider how to bring permanent peace to the countries of the Mano River Union and Côte d'Ivoire.

For instance, the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which began last year, is expected to be concluded by the end of this

year. Although a lot has been achieved with regard to the five benchmarks set by the Council, a great deal still needs to be done. There is the need to ensure that UNAMSIL's withdrawal continues to take into account the Sierra Leone Government's ability to assume its primary responsibility for the nation's overall security, to enhance control of natural resources and to consolidate civil administration throughout the country.

Towards this goal, ECOWAS has identified some potential destabilizing factors, including the possible return of Sierra Leonean ex-combatants from Liberia. In the context of the regional approach to peace and stability, it is vital that UNAMSIL continues to monitor the movement of armed elements along Liberia's borders in order to prevent incursions — a particularly important task — at a time when the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has launched that country's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

The successful disarmament of the combatants by UNMIL is about to resume, following the construction of containment sites. There is the heightened expectation from Liberians that successful disarmament will be carried out. However, there is no doubt that for successful disarmament in Liberia, there must be the whole-hearted commitment of the leaders of the neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The United Nations Office for West Africa should be seized with this assignment and be actively involved in getting those leaders to stay actively engaged in that disarmament process to its very end. Their involvement will help UNMIL to monitor the possible concealment of arms in the territory of Liberia's neighbouring States.

The Security Council should, furthermore, recognize the importance of the linkage between establishing peace in Liberia and consolidating stability in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union subregion. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone should be thoroughly assessed by the United Nations system. A sudden and total withdrawal of UNAMSIL would represent a factor of destabilization for the region. The withdrawal should be progressive to avoid jeopardizing the fragile situation in Sierra Leone. Considering the porous nature of our borders, ECOWAS believes that UNAMSIL should remain in Sierra Leone until the end of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, when a region free of armaments is achieved. This is the surest guarantee for lasting peace in the Mano River Union.

To date, the implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium has made a considerable advance even though there remains a lot to be accomplished. The absence of an ECOWAS structure on small arms and light weapons within the Executive Secretariat makes it difficult for ECOWAS to exercise its political ownership of the Moratorium. Indeed, the experience gained within the Moratorium's five years of existence and its evaluation has enabled relevant lessons to be drawn regarding the mode of its implementation. Therefore, to alleviate the structural, political and financial problems in the implementation of the Moratorium, ECOWAS has established a Small Arms Unit in the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat.

The establishment of the Unit is expected to strengthen the ECOWAS political ownership in the implementation of the Moratorium. Furthermore, it will reinforce the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat's institutional capacities to implement effectively the Moratorium.

The Unit will perform a whole host of tasks, which are fully set out in the printed version of this presentation. To reinforce the institutional capacities the Unit will send missions to member States to ensure that existing national arms production is brought to a halt in conformity with the spirit of the Moratorium. In order to enhance transparency, it will provide the ECOWAS secretariat with an annual report on the ordering or procurement of weapons, components and ammunition covered by the Moratorium, from both national and international sources. It will develop procedures for inter-State cooperation between the agencies responsible for customs and law and order on the one hand, and all other relevant officials involved in monitoring and implementing the Moratorium on the other, and will develop guidelines for intra-State cooperation among those officials.

It is also expected to develop and implement an information strategy in support of the Moratorium, incorporating and building on the activities that are already under way. The strategy will enhance understanding of the support for the Moratorium within the ECOWAS region, throughout Africa, and among international organizations and potential external funding partners.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 51 of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security states that ECOWAS shall take all the necessary measures to combat illicit trafficking and circulation of small arms and that ECOWAS shall strengthen its institutional and operational capabilities and those of its member States for the effective implementation of those measures.

Therefore, the idea of settling up a Small Arms Unit is not to replace the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), but to reflect better the ownership of the Moratorium on Small Arms by the secretariat. It will work in full collaboration with the PCASED secretariat. Although there is a moratorium on small arms and light weapons regulations, it is about time we considered the regulation of external weapon suppliers to strengthen the fight against proliferation.

The last three years of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development have seen eight more national commissions being established. So far, only Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire are yet to set up their national commissions. We would, however, call for support in the area of equipment and other resources for the strengthening of the commissions.

Efforts are continuing to ensure the effective take-off of the Department of Political Affairs, Defence and Security. Directors have been appointed for the Political Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs and Defence and Security Departments and for the Observation and Monitoring Centre.

Regarding the four zonal bureaux, located in Banjul, Ouagadougou, Monrovia and Cotonou, the procedure for the recruitment of a limited number of staff members will be completed with the assumption of duty of the zone-3 — Monrovia — support staff. However, the staff of the zonal bureaux will require special working tools and specialized training in order to be in a position to carry out their duties effectively.

We are aware of the persistent complaints about the obstacles and frustrations of all kinds that travellers and business people go through. The reality, as has been borne out by victims of such a situation, is that the ground operators at our borders have not demonstrated the expected commitment and, perhaps, the inherent sacrifice that go with the performance of their functions. Let me assure the Council that we are driving home as forcefully as we can the ultimate benefits of systematic economic activities and their positive implications for citizens of member countries as well as for integration. This requires intensive public education, integration, dissemination, sensitization and reorientation with respect to our attitudes as well as to our policies and programmes.

ECOWAS has also accepted a role for civil society in developing its conflict mechanism. In fact, civil society's potential to provide information on conflict trends played an important role in creating the ECOWAS early warning observatory, ECOWATCH. Yet, as much as ECOWATCH depends on civil society's involvement to increase its effectiveness, the capacity of civil society to remain involved in these efforts is still uncertain. The financial weakness of most civil society groups in West Africa continues to limit their ability to contribute more effectively to the ECOWAS early warning system. The progressive improvement in the work of the Council of Elders, an important mediatory body composed of eminent citizens of the Community, will also serve to strengthen the operations of an early warning system.

Incomplete disarmament and demobilization, as well as the transformation of militia and rebels into national armies without the requisite training, greatly contribute to the deterioration and degeneration of the security situation. It should, however, be understood that security sector reform should not encompass only military issues. We in ECOWAS want to consider human and economic security issues as well.

Achieving lasting peace in the region is the most serious challenge to be met in order to ensure integration and development. In 2003 alone, the Community and its friends devoted considerable amounts of human and financial resources to conflict resolution in the region. The direct consequences of the conflicts on the economies of crisis-torn countries have served as a constant reminder to us that we need to do everything in our power to find a lasting solution to the conflicts. Conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peace-building, are our watchword as we formulate strategies for 2004 so as to create a region where peace will finally reign supreme.

The Economic Community of West African States is confident that it can, as usual, rely on the unflinching support of the Security Council in its efforts to secure

lasting peace and stability in the region, and appreciate the initiatives of the Security Council in this regard.

The peoples of West Africa continue to manifest their determination to participate in the global movement for the universal establishment of the values of democratic accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law. They are also increasingly exacting the acceptance of these values from their leaders, a new generation of whom is emerging to help build a new West Africa on modern and progressive principles. They need the Council's support at this difficult stage of their development, and I can assure members that, ultimately, they will not let the Council or the global community down.

Once again, we thank the Council for its deep interest in the preservation of peace and security in West Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Chambas: On behalf of the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

Thank you, Sir, for inviting ECOWAS to this very important meeting on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. We are grateful that the Security Council has continued to devote particular attention to the West African subregion, a subregion that has had more than its fair share of conflicts. I am confident that the enormous resources and focus the international community is currently investing in West Africa will yield commensurate results.

This special meeting is being held on the heels of an extraordinary summit of West African leaders with the President of the World Bank, Mr. James Wolfensohn, just held in Accra, Ghana, on 20 March 2004. The meeting was devoted to looking at the challenges of development and integration and of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in West Africa. It came to an important conclusion which is pertinent to today's special session; namely, that the political and socio-economic instabilities in West Africa have been disruptive of the development process and have discouraged long-term investment.

The summit also recognized the importance of a regional approach to economic development, emphasizing that the critical challenges of development could not be faced and dealt with satisfactorily by States acting individually and in isolation. The summit therefore placed a high premium on integration, cooperation and a regional approach to ramp up economic growth and enhance the chances of meeting the Millennium Development Goals in West Africa. The message simply was that, working together with shared responsibilities and mutual accountability, much could be achieved.

That is why we fully share the conclusion reached in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/200) that cross-border problems cannot be solved at the national level alone, but rather require a regional approach. We commend the Secretary-General for the report and find its recommendations to be useful and appropriate for our collective action.

As in the economic field, a regional approach is clearly called for if we are to adequately and effectively deal with cross-border issues such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, trafficking in children, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the movement of mercenaries and non-State armed groups, mass refugee movements and forced displacement, among others.

The menace posed by the upsurge in the use of mercenaries or soldiers of fortune and child soldiers and in the illicit proliferation of small arms in West Africa can no longer be overlooked. Even in countries perceived to be relatively stable and peaceful, waves of armed attacks and the growing activities of trans-frontier criminal gangs are taking on an alarming dimension. The spate of armed attacks and killings, and the growing link among small-arms trafficking, mercenary activities and armed banditry are seriously undermining efforts to achieve economic development, attract investment, ensure political and economic stability, security and the rule of law and to guarantee and protect human rights and freedoms.

The appalling phenomenon of the recruitment and use of child soldiers is still rife, and remains challenging, despite the international conventions and protocols that are in place. Armed factions in West

Africa continue to abusively recruit children and minors as combatants.

The war in Liberia came to an end with the signing in August 2003 of the ECOWAS-brokered Accra Peace Agreement and the subsequent departure of former President Charles Taylor from power, paving the way for a transitional Government. The 15,000-strong United Nations Mission is bringing hope to millions of war-afflicted Liberians.

Armed hostilities ended in Côte d'Ivoire with the signing of ECOWAS-brokered ceasefire agreements and the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. The announced deployment of 6,431 Blue Helmets to consolidate peace and stability there is being awaited with high expectations and has now become even more crucial.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is an example of a United Nations success story and a clear demonstration of how international concern and solidarity towards Africa can bring change and hope in hitherto hopeless situations. We hope the drawdown of that force will be aligned with the duration of missions in neighbouring Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

Hundreds of thousands of the small but lethal arms and light weapons that fuelled those wars have remained in circulation — and in the wrong hands. So, too, have the hundreds of thousands of mercenaries, who have become veritable veterans of West Africa's armed conflicts. Those agents of destabilization have been recruited to fight wars in which they have nothing at stake but their wage — wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the attempted invasion of Guinea in 2000 and 2001. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone reported the attempted crossing of the Sierra Leonean border by armed fighters as hostilities ceased in Liberia and as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) commenced. The Malian authorities also announced the capture of arms-carrying mercenaries of various West African nationalities along its border with Côte d'Ivoire in early March this year.

ECOWAS is very concerned about the threat posed by those cross-border problems and trans-frontier criminal activities. In view of the enormous challenges posed by such issues relating to cross-border activities, various capacity-building initiatives have been stepped up to strengthen and enhance the skills of our staff in the ECOWAS secretariat to deal with them. Thanks to the support of some of our bilateral donors and partners, concrete moves are under way to operationalize the ECOWAS early warning system for conflict prevention so that we become more proactive in dealing with actual and potential violent conflicts through effective monitoring systems. We are currently recruiting technically competent staff to enhance our resolve to deliver in those areas and to stay on top of the issues. In this regard, we look forward to the report of the joint mission of the United Nations and the European Union, which explored, among other issues, support for capacity-building in the ECOWAS secretariat.

West African leaders have renewed their commitment to the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms, and have tasked the ECOWAS secretariat to take necessary measures for the full implementation of the plan of action. In line with this, the secretariat, together with the Governments of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, convened, from 22 to 24 March 2004, a conference in Abuja on combating small-arms brokering and trafficking, to explore appropriate strategies to address the dangers posed by the illicit trade in small arms, which have become West Africa's weapons of mass destruction.

As we work to set up a Small Arms Unit in the secretariat to complement the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development initiative for implementing the Moratorium, what is now required is the political will of West African leaders and the support of the international community to transform the Moratorium into a convention, if we are to make headway in combating the nefarious phenomenon of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Twelve out of 15 national commissions are already operational, and the projected DDR programmes in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire could provide an opportunity for them to build their own national commissions to combat the proliferation of illicit arms and light weapons. Our collaboration with national commissions and civil society organizations is as strategic as it is vital.

The successful disarmament, demobilization, resettlement and reintegration (DDRR) processes in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire will be critical in addressing the daunting task of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. We are aware that the

failed DDRR process in Liberia in 1997 paved the way for the cycle of violence that subsequently unfolded, leading to the second phase of the Liberian civil war. The suggestion that the DDRR programmes in the Mano River Union countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, should be tackled and coordinated regionally ought to be given greater consideration. Collaboration and coordinated action among UNAMSIL, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Office for West Africa and ECOWAS could be a great asset in the endeavour to rid the Mano River basin of illicit arms, mercenaries, trans-frontier drug and diamond traffickers and armed marauders.

We want to see DDRR programmes go beyond the local perception of the purchase of arms from combatants to include the effective reintegration of ex-combatants and their victims. The affected communities must benefit from the process. It will not suffice to limit our efforts on the DDRR processes; we must begin to ask ourselves what it is that has pushed young people to take up arms against constituted authority, and we must work to eliminate the causes. I am referring to the issue of youth unemployment in failed States. In post-conflict reconstruction efforts, priority must be given to retraining, to providing young people with practical, technical skills, to supporting the private sector as it seeks to regenerate its activities and to make available micro-finance for self-employment in agriculture, the trades and cottage industries. In the same vein, capacity-building for economic management and income-generating activities need to be promoted.

Of no less importance are the problems of extortion at roadblocks within and between States members of ECOWAS; child trafficking for domestic and plantation labour, as well as human trafficking for commercial sex purposes; the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is ravaging our communities and workforce; and the dire need for reforms in the security sector. We cannot adequately confront these ills without adequate collaboration with civil society.

Interestingly, there are clear indications that West African civil society is mobilizing and self-organizing. ECOWAS has provided a space for civil society mobilization and collaboration. The first-ever civil society forum of all West African countries was held on the eve of the annual summit of heads of State and Government last December in Accra. ECOWAS is willing to pay greater attention to the recommendations of that particular historic forum. As structures and frameworks for civil society participation in human security issues are being set up at the national and subregional levels, ECOWAS has moved ahead to create a civil society focal point at the secretariat to accommodate and facilitate the budding endeavours and partnerships.

Civil society could play a great role in the drive towards effective implementation of policy decisions, conventions and grass-roots awareness-raising and sensitization. There is no doubt that the "naming and shaming" dissuasive strategy can best be performed with the help of members of civil society who are endowed with track-two diplomacy skills and experience and are often recognized for their usually frank and undiplomatic style.

To attain our common objectives, ECOWAS looks forward to working closely with the international community and, in particular, with the United Nations. Indeed, the ECOWAS secretariat will work closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa in order to draw up a work programme that will include, among other things, the questions of armed groups, democracy, good governance and civil/military relations, and that will contribute to the promotion of lasting peace in West Africa.

I thank the Security Council once again for devoting this special meeting to West Africa. ECOWAS would support initiatives aimed at ridding our subregion of illicit small arms, mercenaries and the practice of child-soldiering and other related trans-frontier vices and crime. I call on all of us to seize this opportunity of renewed attention within the international community, especially the United Nations, to devise and implement concrete and sustainable strategies to curb the daunting cross-border problems in West Africa by establishing confidence-building measures, especially in the Mano River Union conflict system.

I look forward to fruitful, interactive and deepening cooperation with the United Nations on these pertinent issues of peace, security and development in West Africa, and once again I wish you, Sir, a successful tenure as President of the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Egeland (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to inform the Council regarding the humanitarian situation in West Africa.

The humanitarian situation is not desperate. Progress achieved in other crises has shown us the proper way to proceed. In Sierra Leone, for example, all displaced persons were rehoused and ex-combatants reintegrated by the end of last year and emergency humanitarian interventions have given way to development programmes. In Liberia, the unprecedented improvement in the security situation has given humanitarian workers access to populations that had been deprived of assistance. Allow me, however, to focus on the cross-border issues in West Africa that are currently of concern to the international community.

(*spoke in English*)

Too many communities in the subregion remain in a crisis of protection. While open conflict has now been contained, the violation and direct targeting of civilians continues. Brutal killings, rape and sexual abuses, as well as harassment of civilians by State and non-State actors, have too often become the norm. Those acts affect women and children in particular. Moreover, the general deterioration of infrastructure and basic social services in the subregion has increased the vulnerability of affected populations and the level of investment needed to resettle displaced persons and returnees when conditions permit.

In Côte d'Ivoire, civil strife is continuing, as today's violent demonstrations bear witness to. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate due to the cumulative effects of massive displacements, depletion of food stocks, lack of access to land and the collapse of social services. Protection issues range from inter-ethnic conflicts to rampant sexual abuse.

Even in Liberia, where the United Nations Mission has improved overall security, more than 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are still displaced to urban areas. Due to continued insecurity in some parts of the country and the onset of the rainy season, the majority of IDPs will not be able to return to their places of origin before the end of the year.

Guinea, which has had a long tradition of offering asylum to refugees in the subregion, is also faced with considerable humanitarian challenges. Guinea currently hosts over 100,000 refugees, while over 100,000 Guineans have returned from Côte d'Ivoire.

Other countries in the subregion, such as Mali and Burkina Faso, are also directly affected by these conflicts. For example, over 340,000 people have returned to Burkina Faso from strife-stricken Côte d'Ivoire over this past year alone. The capacity of the local communities to receive these massive population movements is extremely limited.

The Council has already been briefed on the establishment of the Joint Humanitarian Review for West Africa, a process led by my Deputy and the Secretary-General's Humanitarian Envoy for the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, Ms. Carolyn McAskie. As the Mano River Union and Côte d'Ivoire were suffering from a protection crisis and inadequate humanitarian response, a regional strategy and plan of action were devised in July 2003, together with all regional stakeholders.

Since then, inclusive regional coordination meetings that include political partners and donor representatives have taken place regularly. A regional contingency plan is close to finalization. A regional protection network has been established. Moreover, the co-location of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Regional Office and the United Nations Office for West Africa has been instrumental in strengthening partnerships with regional political actors. Several United Nations agencies have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to build a strong partnership with its newly formed department of humanitarian affairs.

Let me conclude with the following four points.

First, humanitarian and human rights efforts alone will, as we have seen, often be insufficient in providing protection to vulnerable groups in armed conflict. While all opportunities need to be seized to remind parties to armed conflicts of their responsibility to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, it is a welcome fact that the Security Council is willing and able to take additional measures to stop the abuse and protect civilians.

Secondly, there is a need to forge closer links at the regional level between humanitarian, political and

economic actors in order better to coordinate and implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Continued small-arms proliferation among unemployed youth will mean continued instability in the whole region. Thus it is critical that DDR programmes have a solid and completely financed reintegration component. The efforts made by ECOWAS to enforce its moratorium on small-arms transfers, as just outlined by the Foreign Minister of Ghana and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, are most welcome.

Thirdly, unequal and insufficient assistance among countries and humanitarian sectors hampers a meaningful response to those most in need. In West Africa, such critical sectors as protection, health and education remain seriously underfunded. For instance, Côte d'Ivoire received no funding for projects in any of those sectors under the Consolidated Appeal last year, and Guinea did not receive significant funding for any sector last year.

Fourthly and lastly, the efforts of the humanitarian community in West Africa should not be quick fixes to crises that require a much more comprehensive approach. Their underlying root causes must be fully addressed. Other areas that need to be considered are governance, the rule of law, the proliferation of small arms, and poverty. The implementation of the main recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report which is before the Council today would contribute significantly to addressing our primary humanitarian concerns. I urge the Council to support those recommendations.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Zéphirin Diabré. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Diabré (*spoke in French*): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) welcomes this opportunity to address the Security Council on the important topic of cross-border issues in West Africa. These issues are numerous and varied and include human and armament flows, infrastructure and environmental damage, disruption of economic activity and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS in the region — all leading to increased tensions and conflicts in the subregion and strong impediments to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa clearly identifies the many different root causes of the conflicts in the subregion. UNDP warmly welcomes and endorses the recommendations contained in that report. UNDP is actively engaged in the 12 priority areas identified in the report through its country-level activities and its regional programmes. With its partners in government, civil society and the private sector, UNDP is undertaking programmes and activities targeting policy dialogue, capacity-building and institutional strengthening, all of which contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

Acknowledging the strong link between peace, security and development, UNDP addresses the development dimension of crisis and conflict up front by mainstreaming prevention and peace-building in its development work.

To address the many challenges of peace and security in the subregion, UNDP has developed a regional strategy for West Africa that is based on an integrated regional development approach. The key elements of that strategy include establishing greater coherence between the overall objectives of the United Nations and UNDP's conflict-prevention and peace-building activities in the subregion, with targeted support to the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), including the secondment of a senior UNDP staff member; mainstreaming conflict-prevention and peace-building throughout UNDP's development work in West Africa; strengthening the capacities of ECOWAS in order to enable it to play a more important role in conflict prevention and in peace-building; and carrying out complementary regional activities in the area of human security, such as small-arms-control initiatives in Ghana, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone.

UNDP, together with the European Union and UNOWA, conducted a mission to assess the capacity of ECOWAS in conflict prevention and peacekeeping. Preliminary findings indicate a real need to reorient ECOWAS' approach to those two areas. ECOWAS should have a stronger development focus, reinforce policy dialogue among Member States and strengthen donor coordination. UNDP is ready to assist ECOWAS in implementing these important and relevant recommendations.

In addition to the West Africa strategy, UNDP is also carrying out a number of initiatives to address specific problems related to cross-border issues. These include, first, support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. For example, in Sierra Leone, the recently completed DDR programme led to the reintegration of 51,000 ex-combatants. Our programmes in Liberia and in Côte d'Ivoire are aimed at the reintegration of 38,000 and 50,000 ex-combatants, respectively. We have a specialized team in our Nigeria Office whose goal is to support and assist the ECOWAS secretariat in terms of strategic planning in the area of conflict prevention.

Another initiative involves small-arms programmes in Sierra Leone, the Mano River Union, Ghana and Niger, and support for the establishment of national small arms commissions in several countries of the subregion. Also important is support for the proposed Greater Guinea Forestière Project, a subregional initiative involving Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, which can make an additional contribution to addressing some of the causes of conflict such as uncontrolled mineral resources and the presence of displaced populations.

In addition, UNDP also is providing specific country-level support to Guinea-Bissau with the establishment of the Emergency Economic Management Fund; to Liberia, with the establishment of the Liberian Emergency Governance Fund; and to Sierra Leone, with the so-called 4Rs process — repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Re-establishing peace and security in West Africa, and, consequently, fostering economic development and poverty reduction, requires the support of all development partners. It is essential to provide concrete support to regional institutions so that they can achieve durable results. Adopting a holistic approach that closely links peace-building and development is of fundamental importance: our success in resolving the cross-border issues in West Africa depends on such an approach. New and innovative regional approaches to development, such as a subregional poverty reduction strategy, could help us to attain our common objectives.

UNDP is resolved to work in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies and with other development partners to implement the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Diabré for his briefing.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on a very important question: recent developments in West Africa. I would also like to welcome the participation in this meeting of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nana Akufo-Addo; and all other speakers, whom I thank in advance for their valuable statements.

The Council has before it a comprehensive report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2004/200). We appreciate the fact that the Council has been frequently seized of the situation in West Africa. That does not necessarily mean that the situation on the ground is deteriorating — quite the contrary — although the latest news about disturbances in the region is certainly worrisome. The Council has been looking into the matter more often because there is a growing understanding of the importance of a comprehensive regional approach to deal with the consequences of long years of conflict and instability.

As the delegation of Brazil stated in January, when we considered the progress report on recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa, a regional approach can be the determining factor in solving problems that affect many countries in a similar way and that require common and concerted efforts.

Brazil fully supports the recommendations made by the Secretary-General and by his Special Representative for West Africa. Concerted action among United Nations political and peacekeeping missions and agencies, common border management and the strengthening of arms control institutions are some of the urgently needed initiatives that the Council should endorse. ECOWAS, with the support of the international community, has a fundamental role to play in strengthening the 1998 moratorium on small arms in the region. We also welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that a meeting of defence ministers be held later this year. Such a meeting should enjoy the full involvement of the African Union.

The Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) has also been actively engaged in promoting peace and stability in West Africa. Together with ECOWAS, CPLP has provided its good offices in Guinea-Bissau since the events of September 2003 and has worked with the parties to ensure a peaceful solution to the political crisis. We are looking forward to the holding of parliamentary elections in Guinea-Bissau on 28 March — three days from now — and we expect an orderly transitional period in that country.

It is the view of my delegation that the issue of development should be particularly stressed. Combating subregional and cross-border problems — such as the use of child soldiers and mercenaries and the existence of refugee flows — will not be successful in the long term if development is not sufficiently emphasized. A programme for sustained development must be set up pari passu with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. In recommendation 13 of his report, the Secretary-General stated:

> "To address the needs of the communities receiving demobilized soldiers, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should be accompanied by community development programmes."

We certainly agree with that. However, concrete recommendations on how to deal with this aspect of peace-building have yet to be presented.

We have consistently advocated greater involvement by the Economic and Social Council in this process. Alongside measures to regulate the exploitation of natural resources in the region and to promote fair trade of African commodities, the United Nations and its agencies should be capable of designing focused development strategies to enable post-conflict communities to resume growth and to generate employment and entrepreneurship. That is the only way to respond to the social needs of populations in a sustainable manner. In the long run, the lack of economic activity for the adult population and of schooling for children is likely to lead to further conflict in the region.

That is an additional reason why the United Nations has a responsibility to maintain its presence in post-conflict areas. United Nations peacekeeping operations need to have an exit strategy, but we believe that an effective exit strategy is not limited to downsizing the military presence. It necessarily includes many other dimensions, among them the launching of a consistent social and economic regional development programme. It is not enough to create a stable security environment and to hold national elections; the international community must also support government efforts to consolidate peace and to promote national recovery, addressing adequately the root causes of conflict. Otherwise, the achievements will prove fragile or even elusive.

One last word, on disseminating the right ideas. We consider that the role to be played by the media in supporting sustainable peace efforts should not be belittled. The Organization's public information structure, in particular the information centres existing or to be created in the region, should be actively working with local radio stations to raise awareness of the bitter consequences of conflict and of alternatives to it. We consider that to be of particular importance in the case of West Africa, in view of the cross-border dimension of conflicts in the region.

Ms. Menéndez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretariat for submitting the report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200). We also thank Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for their briefings. We welcome the detailed analysis of the principal challenges confronting the region, as well as the concrete recommendations in that regard contained in the report.

Since the representative of Ireland will make a statement later on behalf of the European Union, we shall confine ourselves to a few brief comments.

First of all, we are pleased to observe the trend towards greater coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the region, and we support the Secretary-General's recommendation that periodic meetings be held among the United Nations peacekeeping missions and political offices in the region. In addition, we understand that we should actively promote participation, where relevant, by

representatives of ECOWAS and of civil society in such meetings.

Secondly, the Mano River Union occupies a special place among subregional cooperation forums. We believe that, in the current context, revitalization of that forum would play a very constructive role in confidence-building, which could lead to the adoption of concrete initiatives, as recommended by the report. Basically, the establishment of joint patrols along the borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire would improve the security situation and would have an additional dissuasive effect.

As for small arms and light weapons, we support the recommendation made by the Secretary-General that member States of ECOWAS consider the possibility of adopting a legally binding instrument, before the expiration of the current Moratorium this year.

Additional initiatives, such as establishment of a regional ECOWAS registry, the possibility of a ban on the activities of mercenaries who operate in the countries of the region, or the establishment of national commissions in order to carry out the Moratorium, are relevant recommendations that warrant serious study by the countries in the region.

Fourthly, the security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes are two key issues necessary to achieving lasting peace in West Africa. DDR is a major challenge which goes beyond the national framework and has clear subregional consequences. Hence, we support a comprehensive approach in applying those programmes that would include the regional dimension and pay particular attention to the reintegration of ex-combatants, with special attention given to the needs of women and of child soldiers.

Fifthly, the efforts in West Africa must be accompanied by a reconciliation process as well as a strengthening of the social fabric of the populations affected by the conflicts. Implementation of the report's recommendations referring to increased participation of civil society through concrete initiatives, in order to convey values of peace, reconciliation and respect for human rights, would, in fact, have beneficial effects in the post-conflict phase.

In conclusion, the report in question provides a solid basis for the work of the Council and my delegation will play an active role in subsequent discussions in order to move forward on the path to an integrated and focused regional approach that would provide an adequate response to the complex challenges faced by West Africa.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): The subregion of West Africa has been threatened by destabilization and is at a crossroads. Three United Nations peacekeeping operations are presently deployed, which shows the extent to which the Security Council is concerned with the conflict situation in the subregion. Through managing crises in the subregion, elements of cross-border instability have progressively been revealed. In looking at the scope of those phenomena, there is no doubt that they threaten the efforts being made to re-establish peace and security in West Africa.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana. We welcome him in our midst and would like to say how pleased we are to see him participating in today's debate.

The report before us enumerates a number of relevant recommendations on the essential matters, particularly three cross-border problems that are the major problems — namely, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the phenomenon of child soldiers and mercenaries, and the matter of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS have given us details on those issues, so I will confine myself to making a few observations.

The report stipulates correctly that the cross-border problems which have been studied are more symptomatic than causal in defining the reasons for the cycle of conflict in the subregion. Therefore, while we are pleased that those questions are being addressed subregionally, we would like to emphasize that some of their causes also have a subregional aspect. Suffice it to recall that most of the countries in the subregion belong to the group of least developed countries. Focusing those recommendations on symptoms, therefore, narrows the possibility of making long-lasting reforms and restoring peace and security in West Africa. We insist on that aspect because the proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light

weapons, the proliferation of militia and civilian armed groups, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, cross-border crime and drug trafficking, and the phenomena of mercenaries and child soldiers are all interlinked; all of those plagues can trace their origins to underdevelopment and even to non-development. Those plagues are links in the chain of the destructuring of our States and the tearing apart of the social fabric of our societies. Their origins can also be traced to the weakening of the capacities of our States to manage their internal contradictions, which every society must do. They reveal the relative loss, according to each particular case, of initiative and of the ownership of the State's own ability to make its own laws and comply with them, and to provide basic social services to their populations.

As a result, we see a weakening and sometimes a loss of the sense of belonging on the part of those impoverished and now marginalized communities in a context where competition for control of scarce resources and power is becoming more bitter.

Therefore, we must focus particular attention on those aspects in upcoming reports in order to make a better linkage between peace and development. The dynamics needed to implement the report's recommendations also imply the strengthening of coordination and collaboration between the representative of the Secretary-General in the subregion and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS.

It is necessary for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa to work together with ECOWAS in order to effectively implement the Moratorium on weapons and build the institutional and legislative capacities of the States in the region in order to implement the provisions of the Moratorium nationally.

It is also necessary for us to strengthen the logistical capacity of ECOWAS in re-establishing peace, security and stability in the subregion so that the States concerned will be enabled to return to their initial raison d'être — development and subregional economic integration.

In addition to the observations just made, the assessment presented to the Council in the report is revealing of the greater awareness by the Secretary-General of the urgency of the situation and the need to act. The United Nations and many developmental partners have deployed substantial efforts to bring peace and stability to West Africa. We would like to recognize those contributions and to call for implementation of a multidimensional strategy so that we can hope to succeed where ad hoc actions or country-level actions have not given us the hoped for results.

Along those lines, we share the vision whereby three areas of responsibility must be clearly established in order to create conditions conducive to the emergence of a synergy. We would also like to insist on the importance we need to attach to harmonizing the policies of DDR at the subregional level, on the other hand, and to assuring adequate financing of those programmes on the other, integrating them more fully with the element of children.

Given that this report will not be the last one, we would recommend, finally, that subregional organizations and the Governments of the subregion be consulted more widely during the process of report-writing in the future so that the content of these reports may be enriched and their scope broadened. We also hope that this will provide an opportunity to offer recommendations for consolidating peace and for the post-conflict phase in the subregion.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We wish to thank the French presidency for convening this important meeting on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. We welcome the comprehensive briefings by the current Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Foreign Minister of Ghana, and by its Executive Secretary, Mr. Chambas, as well as by Under-Secretary-General Egeland and the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Diabré.

In recent weeks, West Africa has been a good example of a multifaceted and integrated approach to conflict situations: a successful example of what the United Nations and civil society can accomplish in conjunction with regional organizations, notably ECOWAS. In the words of the Foreign Minister of Ghana, peace and stability now engender cautious optimism and justified concern, and the establishment of functioning Governments is under way. These results can be attributed to the synergy of actions undertaken by the United Nations and regional organizations. The timely deployment of peacekeeping operations, both by regional groups and by the United

Nations, significantly account for the maintenance of stability in the subregion.

The United Nations now has three large peacekeeping operations in West Africa: the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Those United Nations presences provide an opportunity to deal in depth with regional instability factors and cross-border issues.

In this connection, the international community should seize the opportunity to build on the gains thus far achieved and pursue steps that would further enhance stability and peace in the region. Towards that end, we welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General dealing with cross-border issues confronting the countries of the region, most notably those on proliferation of small arms and the use of mercenaries.

We would like to focus on some points that we believe should be given priority. As rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2004/200), security sector reform lies at the heart of resolving most cross-border regional problems.

On the proliferation of small arms, we congratulate ECOWAS on its adoption of a Moratorium on small arms and on the establishment of a Small Arms Unit in its secretariat. We would encourage ECOWAS to further intensify its efforts to implement the Moratorium beyond its expiration this year, through the adoption of a legally binding instrument, as well as to consider a ban on mercenaries. Recommendations 19 and 20 of the Secretary-General's report — on the enhancement of the capacity of border services such as border guards, police, immigration and customs, and on maintaining a central register of arms held by the military and national security agencies — should also be given priority attention.

Regarding disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, a key recommendation that merits the Council's attention focuses on the need to closely study the lessons learned in DDR programmes in Mali and Sierra Leone for possible application in other areas of West Africa. Due emphasis should be placed on programmes adopted for ex-combatant children, in particular addressing their reintegration and improving their capacities for employment. The need to provide a livelihood for ex-combatants is imperative and should be an integral part of every DDR programme. Without this, the peace process will remain fragile. With an alternative livelihood, ex-combatants would have no reason to pick up arms again.

We would also like to underscore the need for the cooperation and involvement of international institutions such as the World Bank in security sector reform. It may be recalled that the successful implementation of Sierra Leone's DDR programme was accomplished with the support of the World Bank. The experience of Sierra Leone showed how the World Bank can play an important role in post-conflict transitions, complementing political and security efforts of client Governments and the international community.

We need to strengthen coordination among the various United Nations agencies on the ground, in particular the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI. Close cooperation among United Nations offices will avoid duplication of efforts and will serve as a necessary reinforcement measure to further the work of each office. We particularly commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and support the strengthening of his Office.

Finally, in response to today's briefings, we support the adoption of a statement that would establish some sort of a road map for initiatives to be undertaken by international and regional bodies to deal in a practical and operational way with cross-border issues in West Africa.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): Mr. President, my delegation thanks you for convening this important meeting. We would also like to welcome the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Foreign Minister of Ghana, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. We thank them for their very comprehensive and good briefings. We commend them for their strong leadership of ECOWAS, which has been an important factor in efforts to stabilize the subregion. ECOWAS has truly developed into an important partner in the region and for the United Nations.

An important lesson learned in the past decade is that conflict management increasingly must take place in a regional context. We hope that there are important

lessons to be learned from the measures taken in West Africa for other subregional conflicts, such as those in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. Cross-border issues such as refugees, mercenaries, small-arms trafficking and child soldiers are not the cause of conflicts but their symptoms, which in turn exacerbate the conflict. Neighbouring countries, even if they are not drawn into the conflict itself, suffer from it considerably.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2004/200) highlights the need for a fundamental change in the political approach in the subregion, that is, more democratic participation instead of authoritarianism, an end to impunity and an end to the use of violence as a political means. We support that view. There are encouraging signs of a new thinking in the region and in Africa as a whole, be it through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), through the development of African security structures or through increased regional cooperation, as in the framework of ECOWAS.

We are willing to contribute nationally, and in particular through the European Union (EU), to support these promising approaches. The EU has chosen a regional policy and a development approach to the region and considers ECOWAS as a natural partner in this endeavour. The approach must be multifaceted; in addition to strengthening African peacekeeping and crisis management capabilities, it will be necessary to invest more in crisis prevention and early warning. It is in that spirit that Germany is supporting the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Centre in Ghana.

I would like to focus on three of the recommendations of the report.

The first pertains to cooperation among United Nations missions in the region. We strongly support closer cooperation among United Nations missions in West Africa, which is starting to bear fruit. Hopefully, it will lead to synergistic effects and to greater cost-efficiency. A near doubling of peacekeeping troops within just one year places a significant additional burden on Member States. We must not lose sight of this development or of this aspect.

The recommendations in the report about cross-border operations of the United Nations peacekeeping missions in West Africa, including the ability for "hot pursuit", are interesting ideas in this regard. A discussion on this important issue should begin as soon as possible. We are willing to consider incorporating such an approach in future mandates or in the adjustment of existing mandates, based on proposals by the Secretariat, taking into account the legal challenges that cross-border operations present. It is also clear that such cross-border activities will always require close consultation with the Governments in the region.

My second remark pertains to the curbing of illegal trafficking of arms. While countries in the region have to intensify efforts to curb illegal weapons flow to the region, the exporters of arms have to address their responsibilities as well. We therefore support stricter national controls of arms exports and increased transparency in this area. This includes compliance with arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council as well as regional embargoes. We believe that the Governments of small-arms exporting countries should require their companies to better mark these weapons.

The ECOWAS Moratorium on small arms and light weapons remains the main platform for coordinated efforts to combat proliferation of such weapons in the subregion. I fully agree with what has been said by the Foreign Minister of Ghana: small weapons are the real weapons of mass destruction because they kill more people than large weapons of mass destruction. Germany recognizes the important work done so far and calls on all countries concerned to further strengthen and implement the Moratorium. ECOWAS member States should extend the Moratorium, which is due to expire in October 2004, and transform it into a legally binding instrument.

In its resolution 1467 (2003), the Security Council called upon ECOWAS member States to consider the establishment of a regional register of small arms and light weapons. As a first step, member States might focus on records of light weapons, with a view to expanding the register to small arms at a later stage.

My last remark pertains to what is called "naming and shaming". It is our firm belief that by publicly identifying those who recruit children or mercenaries or who violate arms embargoes, "naming and shaming" can be a powerful tool in achieving compliance with embargoes and relevant Security Council resolutions. The Secretary-General's report indicates that this can be difficult in individual cases. However, it should not stop the Security Council from continuing to use this

instrument — of course, with the necessary caution — and to develop it further. We are aware that such a policy has to be based on strong evidence, which existing expert panels, for example, can provide if they are well staffed and well equipped for the task.

In conclusion, we welcome the fact that the Security Council has agreed to incorporate in its presidential statement important operative recommendations from the report. This will focus further attention on cross-border issues in West Africa as a part of a comprehensive approach to the problems of the subregion for which continuing close cooperation between the United Nations and ECOWAS will be increasingly important.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Thank you for convening this meeting, Mr. President, and for your presence with us. The United Kingdom is very grateful for the presence of so many distinguished participants and for their contributions.

I would like to associate myself with the comments which Ambassador Ryan of Ireland will present later on behalf of the European Union.

West Africa should be a high priority for us all. Investments that we have made in individual countries risk being wasted if we cannot collectively find lasting solutions to the interrelated problems of the subregion. We therefore much appreciate the Secretary-General's recommendations on how to tackle them.

If I may, I would now like to make three broad suggestions as to how this report might be followed up effectively.

First, we clearly need a strategic approach. Conflict in West Africa is the result of long-standing structural macroeconomic and governance failure. Mercenary activity, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, environmental degradation, youth unemployment — all these are real problems, but they are also symptoms of a bigger failure. Preventing further conflict requires more than just addressing these symptoms. We need a strategy for dealing with the underlying causes. Such a strategy should build on the existing initiatives, including those of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union, and particularly those of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which have been described this morning. Specifically, in our view, the Secretary-General's recommendations should be implemented within this strategy, so that instead of a series of initiatives we have a coherent, integrated action plan.

Second is the role of key subregional organizations. The United Nations alone, much less the Security Council, cannot devise and implement a conflict prevention strategy. As participants in the ECOWAS summit noted this week, that has to be a collective effort, with the countries of the region taking the lead, supported by ECOWAS, the African Union, NEPAD and the international community.

The European Union recently undertook a joint mission to ECOWAS with the United Nations. That mission proposed a political dialogue with ECOWAS heads of State to endorse a strategic approach to conflict prevention in West Africa. The United Kingdom very much welcomes this strengthening of European Union links with the United Nations, but we also, on the substance, welcome the ECOWAS declaration on subregional peace and security that, as Minister Akufo-Addo mentioned, reaffirmed the importance of a regional approach to conflict prevention and resolution.

Thirdly, we need a more effective use of United Nations assets across the region. The pressure on scarce peacekeeping resources is growing rapidly, with new peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire and, likely, in Burundi and Sudan as well. We have to stock those missions and do justice to those particular cases, but that means using the assets at our disposal to maximum effectiveness, and that is not easy. Sharing resources across missions and across borders risks confusing mission mandates and potentially disrupting the lines of command and control. When it involves joint border patrols it will require agreement from the different Governments concerned. But these potential difficulties have to be tackled and overcome, and the Secretary-General has said in his latest report on the United National Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) that he intends to make recommendations to the Council on this by the end of the year. We look forward to these recommendations because they are very necessary in order to put into place the content of a regional approach by United Nations interventions.

I would like to make three additional points that relate to the Secretary-General's specific recommendations. First, as a number of colleagues have emphasized, trafficking in small arms is one of

the great killers in Africa, and it undermines peace and stability. Organized crime is increasingly involved, and I agree with the comments made by Mr. Chambas on the need for ECOWAS to strengthen its Moratorium and its implementation.

We urge those who have not yet done so to consider ratifying quickly the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, and we would encourage parties to take advantage of assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Technical assistance is available. I specifically welcome the account we have been given this morning of the Unit to be established within ECOWAS to actually tackle the question of small arms.

Secondly, we strongly support the Secretary-General's ambition to involve civil society more widely on issues of governance and security. Civil society has its place, and I listened to what the Minister said about United Nations interaction with government and with civil society. My answer is that of course the United Nations ought to be primarily involved with Government, but it also needs to work consistently with civil society, because there is a key role for civil society in programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, education, the media, and so on. It should be a central element of conflict prevention, not an afterthought. The same goes crucially for the role of women in peace-building, if there is anything that the Special Representative can say to us later to ensure that women's equal participation in the myriad of peace and security issues in the region becomes a reality.

Thirdly, we need to tackle the use and the misuse of West Africa's rich natural resources — timber, diamonds — which should be used to fund development and progress but are on occasion used to fuel conflict. That needs to be tackled. I commend the recent — very recent, indeed — transparency initiative of the extractive industries as a basis for looking at this problem.

In conclusion, I look forward to the Council regularly reviewing progress in this area. I hope also that we will give serious consideration to sending another Security Council mission to West Africa this year to discuss with the Governments concerned and the people on the ground how they see the challenges and how the United Nations can best deliver the support that we need to give.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting and for coming to New York to preside in person. At the same time, I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Chambas.

Due to geographic and historical reasons, the West African countries are deeply interconnected. The situations in the region are deeply intertwined and affect one another. As some delegations have pointed out in their statements, illegal trafficking in small arms and the use of mercenaries and child soldiers are increasing in the region. They have not only exacerbated the tension and turbulence of the countries concerned, they have also had a negative impact on the development of the entire region. They run counter to the common aspirations of the West African countries to seek peace and development. They are not conducive to peace and stability on the African continent.

A marked characteristic of the above-mentioned issues is their transborder nature. Therefore, in order to settle these problems, we must proceed from the regional perspective to a comprehensive strategy. We believe that we must make efforts in the following three areas.

First, the solution to West African transborder issues eventually depends on the efforts of the countries themselves. We endorse the relevant recommendations in the Secretary-General's report. We support West African countries in taking effective measures to seriously combat the spread of small arms and to resolutely stop the illegal use of mercenaries and child soldiers. At the same time, they should undertake necessary reform of the security sector. We encourage all countries to develop good-neighbourly relations and to try to change border areas into places of friendly exchanges, rather than safe havens for illegal weapons.

Secondly, we should allow the regional organizations to play their role. ECOWAS has recently made unremitting efforts to resolve conflicts in the region and has achieved positive results. We appreciate those efforts. At the same time, we hope ECOWAS will assume cross-border issues as their next priority task. Particularly, it might consider formulating a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan.

We support the Mano River Union in playing its dual role. We call on the international community to provide financial assistance to ECOWAS and to help it enhance its capacity-building.

Thirdly, the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region should enhance their coordination and promote the peace process of the West African countries. In recent years, the Security Council has authorized United Nations peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Liberia and other countries, making an important contribution to the stability of the region. The United Nations will shortly dispatch a peacekeeping operation to Côte d'Ivoire. We hope all the peacekeeping operations will enhance their cooperation and will tackle together cross-border issues. That will play a positive role in stabilizing the situation. In that connection, we believe the Secretary-General's recommendation on joint border patrols merits our serious study.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report, small arms, cross-border mercenaries and child soldiers are only symptoms. The fundamental way to achieve lasting peace in West Africa is to promote comprehensive social and economic development in the region. We believe that the international community must continue to actively help countries in West Africa develop their economies, strengthen the rule of law, improve the environment, eliminate disease and achieve sustainable development in order to tackle the root causes of cross-border problems in that region.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and particularly for coming personally to New York to participate in it. That is a very good illustration of the importance France reserves for the problems of Africa, especially African problems of peace and security and particularly West African ones. I thank you very much.

I also wish to thank His Excellency Minister Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for addressing the meeting this morning and sharing with us in the Council the views of ECOWAS with the authority we have been accustomed to when it comes to this place.

I would like to thank Mr. Chambas for the very comprehensive briefing that he gave us. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme for their statements on questions relating to West Africa. They have enabled us to obtain an overall and comprehensive picture of the problems there.

The insightful address given to us by the Secretary-General set out a sound framework for a regional approach to cross-border issues, and we were very pleased that he was able to be with us this morning.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa has also been able to share with us the work done on the ground to bring together the political and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations in the subregion. His important reflections on cross-border issues make a very important contribution and provide a good illustration of the value of the coordinating role that a United Nations office can play in addressing, in a comprehensive manner, the problems affecting a conflict region. The experience gained in West Africa may be useful in other subregions in Africa and beyond, where similar problems urgently require a regional approach.

The report (S/2004/200) provides an important tool to help the Governments of the region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community to tackle the main issues of common concern, especially those relating to trafficking in small arms. Here, I fully agree with the suggestion of our German colleague, that small arms constitute the real weapons of mass destruction in the subregion that we are dealing with and in Africa in general. With regard to the issues of child soldiers, mercenaries and the illegal exploitation of resources, it is our conviction that the objectives can be achieved only if the countries of the region are fully involved throughout the implementation process, thus assuming ownership of the solutions proposed in the report.

While we recognize the gains and comparative advantages of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in the region, we are of the view that, given the temporary nature of such missions, ways should be found to gradually transfer expertise and competence to more permanent mechanisms, such as the secretariat of ECOWAS and the relevant national institutions of ECOWAS member States, in close

coordination with the United Nations Office for West Africa.

Focusing on the recommendations of the Secretary-General, we are pleased to note the clear definition of the respective roles and responsibilities of the United Nations, the States of the region and the partners. However, it should also be borne in mind that, in order for some of the recommendations contained in the report to be addressed by the Governments of the region, the provision of financial and technical assistance will be required.

While agreeing with the assertion in the report that addressing cross-border problems will require radical reform of governance in the region, it is the view of my delegation that the definition of a successful strategy and way forward will require full involvement and leadership on the part of the regional Governments and the active participation of other actors — non-governmental organizations, civil society and the wider international community — with none being excluded.

ECOWAS has been in the foreground as a subregional organization. It has spared no effort in dealing — with the support of the international community — with the crises in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, more recently, Côte d'Ivoire. Those crises have had an adverse impact on the socio-economic situation and impeded the process of economic integration in the region.

The conflicts in the region have also fuelled the proliferation of arms, the recruitment of child soldiers, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the recruitment of mercenaries. Serious consideration should therefore be given to the strengthening of existing regional and national mechanisms, such as the ECOWAS Moratorium on small arms and the Mano River Union peace mechanisms. In this regard, while welcoming the idea of an international conference on assistance to the Mano River Union region, we believe that, in the long-term, the benefits of such a conference would be far greater if its agenda were extended to cover the entire subregion.

We also strongly support the recommendation relating to the ratification and observance of existing international conventions by the countries of the region and by the rest of the international community.

Current realities in the region put a high premium on the need to have an effective regional framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In the framework of strengthening the ECOWAS secretariat, my delegation welcomes the creation of a unit within the secretariat to deal with that critical issue.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to underscore that, in finding solutions to address cross-border problems in the West African subregion, the importance of strengthening the relationship of cooperation between ECOWAS and the African Union, especially its recently established Peace and Security Council, should be actively pursued.

My delegation is engaged in pursuing, within the Security Council, ways of achieving the more effective implementation of the proposals contained in the report, and I look forward to the suggested discussion on the ground with the leaders of the countries when the Security Council decides to go again to the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Angola for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): You have honoured the Security Council, Mr. Minister, by your decision to be with us today to preside over this meeting on West Africa. That is but one indication of the contribution which France continues to make in seeking the restoration of peace, stability and economic progress in that important subregion of Africa.

My delegation would also like to welcome the participation of and opening statement made by the Secretary-General in this debate. Let me also welcome the Foreign Minister of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, in his capacity as the representative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as Mr. Chambas, Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, and thank them for the thoughtful statements which they have made and which have so enriched our proceedings.

Our discussion today is an important follow-up to the Security Council mission to West Africa last year. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on ways and means to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. Our appreciation is also due to the efforts of Mr. Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

The Secretary-General's report focuses primarily on three issues: small arms, mercenaries and child soldiers. These are important issues indeed. However, as the introductory part of the report notes, these are but a few factors for instability in West Africa. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that the relationship of these three factors with the cycle of violence and instability is primarily symptomatic, not causal. If there were no armed conflicts, the demand for and use of small arms, mercenaries and child soldiers would also cease to exist.

The specific recommendations made by the Secretary-General provide a useful framework for the Council's efforts to redress the situation through a regional approach. Many of the recommendations — related to enhanced cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system; the strengthening of existing structures and institutions at the national and subregional levels; better implementation of existing conventions and legal instruments; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reforms; and the building of confidence and trust between the countries of the region — merit close attention by the United Nations, ECOWAS, the regional Governments and international partners in their respective spheres. A number of those recommendations have been reflected in the draft presidential statement which the Council is likely to adopt today.

As has been said here, we need to effectively utilize the peacekeeping operations which have been deployed in the region. They are an important tool in the hands of the Council to help address the underlying problems, including cross-border issues. Their deployment, the renewal of their mandates and drawdown should be carefully planned by the Council, keeping in mind the regional context.

Pakistan is participating in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). We will also be contributing troops for Côte d'Ivoire. The Pakistani contingent in Sierra Leone, comprising a brigade, is deployed in the sensitive diamond-mining areas in the eastern part of the country. Just across the border, two Pakistani battalions are deployed with UNMIL in a difficult area that has been the scene of militant activity in Liberia in the recent past. In the context of checking the cross-border movement of militants, Pakistani troops deployed in Sierra Leone have participated in operations specifically conceived for the purpose, such as Operation Blue Horizon.

As we set out to support a regional approach for West Africa, we must be cognizant of two overarching requirements: first, a participatory process and, secondly, the capacity to implement it. In our view, better and effective implementation can be achieved, especially by individual States, if they are fully engaged in the process, including through transparent and open decision-making. The same applies to subregional organizations. It would be logical to harmonize policies at all levels in order to derive optimum benefit from cooperation with subregional organizations. The Council should also be mindful of capacities at the national level to carry out actions being proposed to the States of the subregion in the context of a regional approach. The possibilities of assistance for such capacity-building must be carefully examined.

In our view, it is equally important to identify and address the root causes of conflict. Those causes involve, among other things, the exclusion of regional, ethnic or religious groups from participation in political and economic power-sharing. Human rights violations are a result of this situation. Underdevelopment, poverty, widespread unemployment, hunger and disease, poor governance and lack of accountability, weak State institutions and lack of State authority further compound the problems. Many of the conflicts are rooted in the struggle for power and the scramble for resources. As we seek to eliminate or contain these conflicts, we have to cut off the sources of financing that enable the warring parties to sustain the conflict through the acquisition of arms, the hiring of mercenaries and the use of child soldiers.

My delegation has stated on earlier occasions that durable solutions to the complex crises in Africa can be achieved only through a comprehensive and composite approach. No approach can be comprehensive without an adequate focus on development. Economic progress and development, and not punitive measures, should be the preferred course of action. Even in applying sanctions, the approach must be comprehensive and balanced. First, the impact of sanctions — especially economic sanctions — against developing countries has to be compensated through other means in order to avoid undue suffering caused to innocent people. Secondly, the scope of sanctions, when applied, should address all the causes of the conflict. For example, the

linkage between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the fuelling of conflicts in West Africa is well established. The emphasis so far has been on the supply or production side of the illegally exploited natural resources.

In our view, it is equally important to focus on the demand or consumption side of this illicit activity. Naming and shaming and sanctions should be applied to all those who are involved. Those who finance these wars by buying and trading in the illegally exploited resources of Africa are indeed merchants of death. Their crime is no less than that of those who finance terrorism. We need to trace the money trail back to the sources of financing of these callous and bloody wars in Africa.

We hope that the future report of the Secretary-General on West Africa will devote attention to these and other important cross-cutting issues in order to complement the recommendations made in the present report with a view to evolving a truly comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization in that important subregion of Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome our guests to today's meeting of the Security Council.

The ongoing discussion has shown that West Africa has accumulated a tremendous negative potential for subregional and cross-border problems, with a consequent threat to peace and security, the integrity of States and the well-being and lives of people. Africa is encountering a new generation of challenges. Russia views the strengthening of stability on the continent as an integral part of the work of building a global system, under United Nations auspices, to counteract the new threats that have emerged. We cannot expect a harmonious development of international relations if African States, which represent one of the world's largest communities, continue to find themselves in a political, socio-economic and ethnic "earthquake zone".

We have carefully studied the report submitted today by the Secretary-General. The recommendations contained therein are comprehensive and multifaceted in nature and mesh fully with the challenges of neutralizing the major cross-border problems in West Africa. Those recommendations apply to all the players in the subregion — national Governments, regional and subregional organizations, civil society, the United Nations and the international donor community.

We are pleased to note that the report reflects ideas developed by the Russian delegation during the Security Council's mission to West Africa in June 2003 and during Council meetings held at United Nations Headquarters. We support the recommendation contained in the report aimed at modernizing national legislation, as well as the legal basis of inter-State relations, in accordance with existing international conventions and other instruments.

We are convinced that this type of measure will help strengthen national statehood, develop democratic standards and promote the rule of law in West African countries – areas of weakness which, as acknowledged by African leaders, are the reason for the current instability in West Africa.

We welcome the proposals aimed at strengthening the national borders of African States. The Russian delegation has on a number of occasions advocated that — without prejudice to inter-State dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, integration measures or cross-border communication among populations — specific measures be taken along borders to address threats such as the proliferation of illegal armed groups, the cross-border spillover of conflicts, the movement of mercenaries and child soldiers, the illegal arms trade and the illegal exportation of natural resources. The recommendations of the report on reforming the security sector and on leveraging donor capabilities are a step towards resolving these problems.

We were pleased to see the new United Nations peacekeeping practice of ensuring close interaction between the Organization's missions in neighbouring States of the subregion. It is very important that this be done in a coordinated manner and that the United Nations Office for West Africa play a key role in this respect. In so doing, we must exhibit due diligence. The coordinated actions of United Nations forces in the subregion must violate neither the sovereignty of individual States nor the mandates of specific missions.

Russia is ready to study and consider constructively in its work in the Security Council other

recommendations of the Secretary-General, including those dealing with the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, as well as those dealing with cooperation with subregional organizations — the Economic Community of West African States in particular — and in resolving the problem of impunity, child soldiers and so on.

Although West Africa has a great many problems, international cooperation has significant potential in terms of resolving them. It is important that this be done in a specific and timely manner. In many ways, this is a unique kind of experience; if successful, it could be applied to other regions of Africa and elsewhere. In that regard, it would be advisable, in United Nations meetings with regional organizations, to consider international peacekeeping in West Africa as a separate matter.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I wish, Sir, to welcome you to the Security Council. It is an honour that you and Minister Akufo-Addo are here today. We would like also to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ould-Abdallah, as well as Mr. Chambas for their presence, and, of course, the French presidency for its efforts to bring the important question of regional cooperation in West Africa to our attention.

We heartily endorse the Secretary-General's desire, as expressed in his report, to focus on concrete, practical solutions to the region's problems. We hope that this meeting and any follow-on discussions will adopt "concrete" and "practical" as words to watch for and to continue to stress. The report should be an initial step in a process of serious sustained engagement in problem-solving on the issues that face West Africa.

The report comes shortly after a decision by the Security Council to authorize a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire. We now have several United Nations peacekeeping operations in three neighbouring countries in West Africa. There can be question of the Security Council's commitment to peace in the region, and there can be no more fortuitous time for the States of the region to take advantage of a genuine opportunity to ensure lasting peace and security.

The three contiguous peacekeeping operations also present a precedent-setting opportunity for comprehensive and creative approaches to some of the cross-border problems highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. We also have the opportunity to achieve increased efficiency in the use of United Nations resources in combating the problems that plague the region. Representatives of the region are addressing today in the Council these problems in greater detail, and we will need to continue to discuss them. But I would note that, among the more important issues, of course, are the movement of arms, the question of child soldiers and the movement of foreign combatants across borders.

Thus far the United Nations missions in West Africa have taken positive steps towards enhanced cross-border cooperation. The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Force Commanders are gathering and consulting on a frequent basis. We applaud and support these efforts.

In addition, we would like to see the Security Council discuss with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Governments concerned how to authorize United Nations missions in West Africa to take the next steps in combating cross-border problems by carrying out and conducting cross-border military operations and air patrols. This is critical for stopping the cross-border movement of rebels, arms and resources and will make the three United Nations peacekeeping forces far more efficient.

Of course, this idea must be thoroughly vetted. There are many issues involved. But efficiencies, synergies and mission successes will result. We propose, as a first step, both within the United Nations and in capitals, to engage with DPKO and interested Security Council members to consider mechanisms and protocols that could begin to govern such operations and are prepared to support consideration of an enabling Security Council resolution on this subject. We would welcome further thought from missions in the field that could usefully inform us and ground these discussions.

There are a number of key cross-border and subregional problems that directly threaten the peace and security of the States in the region, but I would like to focus in particular on the question of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR), which is so critical for the success of post-conflict transitions. National DDRR programmes must consider the cross-border dimensions of conflicts and the variety of nationalities among combatants. That task is not easy, but it is critical if we are to succeed.

We are concerned about issues such as competing stipend packages in different countries that may actually influence combatants or appear to be in competition with one another, since the perceptions of the combatants will be key in that regard. We urge the relevant United Nations missions and agencies in the region — along with the World Bank — to consider how disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programmes are structured in neighbouring countries and how they can be harmonized. We would also note the importance of attention to the particular needs and contributions of women in DDRR programmes. Given that DDRR is central to ensuring that hostilities do not resume and that there is a basis for the re-emergence of civil society and of a functioning economy, we urge the commencement of DDRR in Côte d'Ivoire and in Liberia as quickly as possible.

In Côte d'Ivoire, we are disappointed that the decision of the Security Council to authorize a peacekeeping operation has been followed by increased tensions and perhaps an uneven approach to the Linas-Marcoussis implementation process. We ask all of the Ivorian parties to take the steps necessary to ensure that, in a few weeks — when the operation is formally established — there will be a peace to keep and a political process to keep on track. We are disturbed and saddened by the violence that resulted in the death of a number of Ivorians in Abidjan just last night.

We call on the Government and on the leaders of all parties to rise above partisan interests and to immediately demonstrate the spirit of flexibility essential to full implementation of the commitments already made and reflected in the Linas-Marcoussis accords. It is essential that all sides now engage, on a specific time frame, to move ahead on all issues addressed in the accords, including legislation, DDRR and electoral issues. Ivorians must realize that the time to achieve peace and reconciliation is now, and that senseless violence serves the interests of no one and can quickly spiral out of control.

In Liberia, we would like to see DDRR resume as quickly as possible. We recognize the enormous impediments, including limited infrastructure, too few staff and difficult security considerations. But, until fighters are disarmed and demobilized and until they enter programmes for their reintegration and rehabilitation, the threat to Liberia's stability remains palpable. We encourage the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to move forward as quickly as possible and to set a date by which DDRR will resume. However, responsibility lies with national as well as international actors, and we likewise encourage Monrovia's National Commission on Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration to meet and to act.

On Sierra Leone, we echo the representative of the United Kingdom in welcoming the recent report on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the commitment therein to follow up on the report with regard to potential cross-border operations. We also note the recommendation of the Guinean Foreign Minister that UNAMSIL be extended until 2005. We assure him that the Council has begun to consult on that very issue as a way of ensuring that the successes we have achieved are not reversed.

In closing, the two issues I have emphasized — cross-border operations by peacekeeping operations and DDRR — are only two of the critical West African problems that were noted in the Secretary-General's report and that are worthy of United Nations attention. We look forward to addressing these issues here today and in the coming months, especially as the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone change in shape and size.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to see you, Mr. Minister, presiding over the Council today. I am also pleased at the presence and the very valuable contributions of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at this meeting.

My delegation believes that the report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200) is both timely and important. It signals a qualitative change in the approach to peace and security issues. Rigorously applied, that approach can lend greater consistency and effectiveness to the international community's efforts to establish lasting peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The Secretary-General has identified cross-border problems that feed and exacerbate the chronic instability afflicting the West African region, and he proposes elements of a strategy to address them. We agree with him that the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the use of mercenaries and the recruitment of child soldiers

represent reprehensible and dangerous scourges that feed and are fed by war and instability.

It would have been wise — and we wonder why this was not the case — to include on this list the illegal exploitation of natural resources, since it seems obvious that that activity plays a role in the outbreak and perpetuation of the cyclical and tumultuous conflicts that ravage the Mano River region. Moreover, on the basis of that observation, Canada is preparing to propose to the General Assembly, on behalf of the members of the Kimberley Process, a draft resolution on the role of diamonds in the perpetuation of conflicts.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his 33-point action plan to organize the international community's response to these scourges. The recommendations reflect a concern for operational effectiveness. The need to act with a sense of urgency — which we totally support — seems to have guided the report's authors in their choices as well as in the formulation of recommendations and of the practical plan to implement them.

Nevertheless, we believe the fight against these phenomena is somewhat limited to an equation dominated by the security dimension, although that remains extremely important. The report does not overlook related matters, however. It emphasizes — although without sufficiently establishing a relationship among them — all the factors that could influence the international community's efforts to eliminate these problems. I shall mention only a few: youth unemployment, social exclusion, governance problems, the treatment of victims of human rights violations and the long-term reintegration of demobilized combatants, particularly women and children.

It is because this fight challenges the entire international community that it must be carried out in a resolute, concerted and united way. Algeria also fully supports the partnership formula for implementation of the action plan. Only partnership will enable us to mobilize energies and to combine the efforts of everyone — the United Nations system, States, regional and subregional organizations and civil society representatives — to give this fight every chance of success.

However, with respect to the partnership's mode of operation, we would have preferred an approach based on an order of priorities, identifying what requires immediate action and what is longer-term, because — as with the fight against terrorism and organized crime — the response must be based on enforcement as well as on a prevention strategy. Such an approach, furthermore, would make possible an unambiguous division of responsibilities. It is absolutely necessary to reconcile immediate requirements with the international community's long-term action in this area.

First of all, this fight should be undertaken mainly by the United Nations. The Organization can and must take advantage of the unprecedented deployment in the subregion, first of all to curb this trafficking and then to create the conditions for its eradication. It is certain that the return of peace and stability to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire will considerably reduce the risk of the proliferation of these phenomena. In that regard, the operational coordination among the United Nations missions in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone is vital and should be strengthened and expanded. On another level, the successful implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in those three countries — supported, if necessary, by a regional DDR plan — will be decisive for the success of this fight.

States, for their part, must support this undertaking by fully respecting the obligations they have assumed under international legal instruments, whether pertaining to mercenaries, to the illicit weapons trade, to the protection of children or, more generally, to the rules of international humanitarian law. It is clear that an effective struggle against those problems cannot be limited to selective efforts. A reliable and lasting prevention strategy, borne by the organizations of the subregion, its States and its populations, is more necessary than ever. The achievement of that objective requires support from the international community to assist organizations and States of the region.

The report advocates relevant measures — the strengthening of the ECOWAS Secretariat, the reactivation of the Mano River Union, support for national commissions in charge of implementing the Moratorium on small arms and support for the security sector reform — to mention just a few, are, in fact, conducive to preparing the subregion to take up where the United Nations leaves off, in conflict prevention and peacekeeping at the level of the subregion. To use

a concept that is popular in the United Nations, it is a matter of allowing the subregion to appropriate that long and difficult process.

Algeria believes that the report of the Secretary-General is the starting point of a long process. United Nations action must be long-term in nature. The partnership that we would like to see set up among all of the players concerned with cross-border problems should have a level of ambition and commitment which is commensurate with the challenges and threats that the problems raise with regard to international peace and security.

Decisive combat against those scourges would benefit from being supported and accompanied by a comprehensive approach which would integrate matters of peace and development, a strategy designed and implemented by the organizations and countries of the subregion with the support of the United Nations system and its development partners. In other words, the contribution of the international community must be part of the establishment of a regional security system which would guarantee security in all of the countries of the subregion, as well as the legitimate aspirations of its peoples for economic development and social progress.

The United Nations must acquire the proper means of analysis and monitoring. The establishment within the United Nations Office for West Africa of a monitoring unit made up of multidisciplinary experts working hand in hand with the ECOWAS Secretariat and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, seems to us to be useful and necessary. That unit would advise the Secretary-General and the Security Council on the ways to make the international community's combat against the scourges more effective. Special attention should be given to the proven links between arms trafficking networks and terrorist groups and must ensure that such a relationship, which is based upon mercantile considerations, does not become a dangerous collaboration against peace and security in the world. In that context, coordination with the future observer office of the African Union for terrorism, which will be based in Algiers, seems necessary and desirable.

The Security Council must, for its part, take further action and indicate its willingness to adopt a long-term view when it comes to fighting the problem. Cross-border problems must be considered as threats to international peace and security under the meaning of Chapter VII of the Charter, and treated as such. It goes without saying that in order to succeed in that combat, the international community must marshal all of the resources at its disposal and show political willingness, determination, boldness and solidarity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the Council for organizing this timely and important debate. The Romanian delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his interesting presentation this morning. We also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and of the representative of the African Union. Romania associates itself fully with the statement to be made shortly by the presidency of the European Union.

We are pleased with the fundamental vision as well as the content of the report of the Secretary-General concerning ways to approach the subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa. The reports lends a more pragmatic character with respect to the progressive emphasis that the Council is putting on the regional dimension with respect to crises and how to resolve conflicts in West Africa.

With three United Nations peacekeeping missions now deployed at different stages in West Africa — the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) — it would appear that we have reached a critical United Nations mass in the region. That means that, in the given situation, there is a stronger impact in combating the different sources of cross-border instability, in particular the movement of mercenaries, of child soldiers and armed groups, as well the trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Still, the consolidated and better coordinated presence of the United Nations on the ground is but one piece of a much broader system. The United Nations is supposed to act with more congruence in following up on synergies achieved with the other actors, in particular, national Governments and subregional organizations, as well as the donor community, including the European Union.

Against that backdrop, we were very interested to read the recommendations which are part of the 12

categories analysed in the report of the Secretary-General. With respect to the comprehensive and composite approach in the report, we find no fewer than 33 recommendations which provide a useful inventory of general strategies and specific measures that could, when implemented, add value to the entire effort.

At this time we would like to commend Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, for the exceptional work he has done. We must, however, be realistic with respect to the prospects for each recommendation. Some of them seem more practical for quick implementation. Others will need some time to materialize because they require the adoption of institutional and legislative measures, both nationally and regionally. In any case, the encouragement and assistance by the Council and other major components of the international community will be critically important to the issue.

We are also of the view that the new logic of the regional approach, emphasizing cross-border problems in West Africa, will, as usual, require the use of different approaches, such as international sanctions, the usefulness of which has been proven in the practice of the Security Council, or procedures such as "name and shame". One could add the contribution of civil society to that approach, in particular, from women's organizations.

(*spoke in English*)

My second point relates to the regional spearheading role that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is expected to keep on playing in West Africa. ECOWAS seems to be involved in the implementation of part of the recommendations laid out in the Secretary General's report.

In view of the complexity and diversity of the present cross-border and subregional challenges in West Africa, we consider this the right time to express renewed confidence in the capacities of ECOWAS, as one of the most relevant partners of the United Nations in Africa. We therefore welcome the measures envisaged by the European Union in order to provide ECOWAS the support it requires to strengthen its profile as a regional player. Of particular interest will be the follow-up of the recent European Union-United Nations joint mission to ECOWAS aimed at endorsing a strategic approach to conflict prevention in West Africa. Eventually, the present recommendations of the Secretary General could become an integral part of such a strategy.

We consider it necessary to strengthen international cooperation in supporting full implementation of the ECOWAS arms Moratorium, including by providing technical expertise and capacity-building for registration of small arms and light weapons, as well as disarmament, demobilization rehabilitation and reintegration at subregional and national levels. Support for West African countries in building institutions and institutional capacities for good governance through better policing and security reform should also take priority on the agenda of international and regional organizations.

Romania joins the other Security Council members in welcoming the upcoming comprehensive study on these issues undertaken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa in conjunction with the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and Member States concerned.

We also take note of the references to the Mano River Union made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2004/200). Meanwhile, effective efforts and assistance aimed at re-energizing the Mano River Union could prove worthwhile in the fight against cross-border threats and regional destabilizing factors. We firmly support concrete actions to that end, such as the establishment of joint border patrols in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire in conjunction with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

(*spoke in French*)

Finally, I would like to emphasize that our support for the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report stems from our firm conviction that there is exceptional potential for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. In this regard, I would quote an African proverb: those who make the trip in the same canoe will all end up in the same place.

We are also considering the possibility of organizing, during the Romanian presidency of the Security Council, an open debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations

in stabilization processes. We therefore invite Council members to continue to think about new recommendations and about practical contributions that would help increase the effectiveness of the regional approach and the development of specific solutions for the challenges and needs of the region.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased by the presence, at this Security Council meeting on West Africa, of the French Minister Delegate for Cooperation and Francophonie, Mr. Pierre-André Wiltzer, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, and the other officials who have taken the floor, including the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Cross-border regional problems generate instability and tend to perpetuate tension and the effects of conflict. In West Africa, these problems have proven to be resilient even after the critical phase of a conflict is over. Cross-border regional problems in West Africa go beyond the aspects that were addressed in the presidential statement of 25 July 2003 (S/PRST/2003/12). Indeed, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the use of child soldiers and of mercenaries, which are subjects of the Secretary-General's recommendations and which we are discussing today, should be added to other matters which are equally critical for the region's stability, such as HIV/AIDS, massive refugee flows and human rights violations.

All the recommendations that are formulated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2004/200) have something in common: they require a coordination of efforts. We believe that the international community's role in this area is one of facilitation and support, since it cannot supplant the role of the States that are directly involved, which hold the greatest responsibility for tackling these problems. This is especially relevant in the light of the regrettable acts of violence that have recently taken place in Côte d'Ivoire, involving the very sectors of that country that must ultimately implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

We are in the initial stages of a process that must incorporate those States that are directly concerned, the regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations and civil society. We must pursue a comprehensive regional approach that incorporates preventive action to counter these cross-border problems. A central element in dealing with regional cross-border problems is the coordination that must be carried out by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Office for West Africa. This point has already begun to be incorporated in Security Council mandates. Coordination between the United Nations and ECOWAS should also be considered as part of this effort.

Among the Secretary-General's recommendations, I would like to highlight the importance placed on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes and on the need for these programmes to tackle cross-border problems as part of a regional strategy. Increasingly, DDR programmes are a central component in designing peace agreements. For that reason, DDR must be a priority instrument in tackling cross-border regional problems.

Lastly, we underscore the fact that, in order to tackle the basic problems involved in cross-border matters, there must be a greater involvement of regional and subregional organizations within the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter. The African Union, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union should assume a dominant role in this area.

The President (*spoke in French*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

First of all, I would like to say that I am pleased that the Security Council was able to hold this meeting today, a meeting which France had sought for this month in order to examine the cross-border problems that threaten peace and security in West Africa. I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming the presence of Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, who is the current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, its Executive Secretary. I would also like to warmly thank everyone who has taken the floor this morning.

This meeting of the Security Council is taking place at a time of hope for the settlement of crises in West Africa but a time in which, as we can see today, threats and elements of fragility persist. Following Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have in turn initiated peace processes through the Linas-Marcoussis

and Accra Agreements, respectively. We must ensure that these hopes for peace materialize. Of course, the primary responsibility in this respect rests with the signatories of the agreements, who must fully and unconditionally, both in Liberia and in Côte d'Ivoire, implement the commitments they have undertaken. France appeals to them to do so.

The international community, for its part, must continue decisively to support their efforts, as it has been doing, and in this respect, the involvement of ECOWAS must be welcomed. For its part, the Security Council has taken many initiatives aimed at restoring peace in the region. France has been at the forefront in many of these areas. In Côte d'Ivoire, France will maintain a substantial presence for peace alongside the United Nations peacekeeping operation which is to be put in place in the coming days.

I would like to recall once again that the responsibility for restoring stability and peace rests primarily with the Ivorian parties themselves. When mutual commitments have been undertaken, it is everyone's duty to respect them. Violence is taking place, as we speak, in Côte d'Ivoire. France expresses its concern and urgently calls for restraint and appeals to the sense of responsibility of all of those involved in Côte d'Ivoire.

In order to be fully effective, the mobilization of the international community must provide a long-term benefit to the region as a whole. Here we welcome the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in West Africa. The recommendations presented this morning in the Secretary-General's report and in the statements on this subject outline paths of cooperation between States of the region and regional and subregional organizations, including ECOWAS and the African Union, the United Nations and other States and partner organizations. A few points deserve to be highlighted.

First, we have to coordinate better the considerable resources that the international community has committed to the region and the many initiatives to support the peace process. This has been said by several speakers this morning. This issue is especially urgent when it comes to the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), which is being carried out simultaneously in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. We must also urgently end the trafficking of small arms and the recruiting of mercenaries who destabilize entire countries. It is the responsibility of all the States in the region, but also — and I am thinking in particular of arms trafficking — it is also the responsibility of all the other States, which are potentially concerned by the export, the brokerage or the financing of operations involving small arms and light weapons.

With the assistance of the international community, the countries of the region must combine their efforts in order to better monitor their borders, dismantle illegal checkpoints, which hinder the free movement of people and goods, fight the illegal exploitation of natural resources, ensure security in the refugee camps and fight drug trafficking. I am also thinking about the situation of children in armed conflicts, which is a particularly tragic aspect of those conflicts and which should be the object of special mobilization and action on the part of States of the region and of the international community as a whole.

There are many very useful proposals in the Secretary-General's report, and we should thank him for them. A few additional ideas could be added to those set out in the report. For example, why should we not consider setting up, in a regional context, an embargo on arms destined for armed groups and non-States groups? Or perhaps we could help the countries of the region strengthen their control over their natural resources through the support of United Nations peacekeeping operations or through other mechanisms.

Apart from these ideas and proposals, the States of the region and the international community as a whole must also stress conflict prevention in order to prevent falling into a spiral of instability. We must be attentive to situations that, without being overt crises, are likely to deteriorate rapidly. The Secretary-General drew our attention to this point in the conclusion of his report. He invited us to pay particular attention to the situation in Guinea.

Generally speaking, we should coordinate this preventive approach in the different international authorities concerned — the United Nations and the Security Council, of course, but also regional and subregional organizations as well as international financial institutions. Let us better coordinate our collective action in order to prevent these crises and conflicts.

Lastly, a new mobilization of Africans for peace and development in their continent should also be

supported. The stabilization of West Africa and the continent can be possible and lasting only through the mobilization of the African partners themselves. We should pay special tribute to the initiatives already undertaken. I have already mentioned ECOWAS in West Africa, but the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) in the Central African Republic and the African Union in Burundi are also key players in the restoration of peace through their intense diplomatic efforts but also, when necessary, through the establishment of a military presence for stabilization. The African Union has decided to set up a Council for Peace and Security. This new body will be a special partner of the United Nations Security Council, since a large part of the latter's activity is devoted to Africa.

Within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), African States have chosen to further develop their collective action for peace and security, and for this they have decided to increase their institutional and operational capacities.

These initiatives all attest to the African willingness to respond to challenges of their continent. The international community must support these efforts. France provides them all its support and will continue to do so. It remains very active with its partners within the European Union so that the latter may reinforce its efforts for the service of peace and development in Africa.

I now resume my functions as President.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Ireland. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro; and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union enjoys a rich and deep engagement with Africa, both directly and in partnership with the United Nations. Our commitment to Africa is a result of our belief that the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa constitutes one of the major challenges to the international community today. A fundamental principle of the European Union's relationship with Africa has been to assess our engagement there on a continental, regional, subregional, national or local level, as called for by the issue at hand. Nowhere has the need for a regional approach been more evident in recent years than in West Africa.

West Africa has suffered years of violence, population displacement, human rights abuses of the most heinous kind and economic depression due to conflicts exacerbated by regional rivalries and insecurities. As peace begins to gain a foothold in West Africa, we now recognize not only the regional origin of many of the root causes of the conflicts there but also the logic of a regional approach to their solution. Challenges which demand this regional approach include the reintegration of child soldiers, disarming and demobilizing irregular and sometimes mercenary forces that do not respect national borders, protecting women and children from sexual violence, facilitating the return and resettlement of displaced persons and refugees, tackling the culture of impunity, restoring the rule of law, overcoming environmental degradation and stemming the proliferation of small arms.

In this context, the European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative in requesting the report from the Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, on defining a holistic strategy for addressing the regional problems in West Africa. In particular, we welcome the report's focus on providing practical action-oriented recommendations, which provide us with much food for thought.

The Secretary-General's report we discuss today calls for increasing the level of contact between United Nations senior staff in West Africa. As we are cognizant of the recommendations of the Brahimi report regarding improved coordination within multidimensional peacekeeping operations, it appears logical that we also seek to improve coordination among missions active within a subregion where improved contact and information-sharing would assist those missions to fulfil their respective individual mandates with improved effectiveness. In that regard, the European Union commends the efforts that have already begun to develop a closer working relationship

among the United Nations missions in West Africa with the series of meetings of the leaders of the United Nations operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

A major theme running through the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General is the need for improved regional integration in West Africa. In this context, it is worth noting that while the European Union continues to consider a regional strategy for West Africa focused on conflict prevention and resolution, one element of that strategy is already clear: regional integration is a key factor in addressing the overarching challenge in West Africa of integrating short-term crisis-management activities with a longer-term preventive strategy. That is and will remain a central tenet of our engagement with West Africa, not least of all through the offices of the European Union presidency's Special Representative, Mr. Hans Dahlgren.

The European Union has a close working partnership with the Economic Community of West African States, and the recent joint EU-United Nations assessment mission to West Africa focused on ways to increase cooperation with, and assist in strengthening the capacity of, ECOWAS.

The report we consider today highlights important areas where improved regional integration and cooperation will be of significant benefit. These areas include, inter alia, the need for ratification and implementation by the countries of the region of all instruments designed to address issues such as child soldiers, small arms and mercenaries; the need for all countries of the region to abide by these instruments and for the international community to support national capacities for their implementation; the need for improved regional cooperation and dialogue through existing regional and subregional mechanisms; the importance of implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in a coordinated fashion and with the close involvement of civil society; and the need for the careful planning of security sector reform, drawing on lessons learned from past United Nations missions in the region and elsewhere.

In addition, regional integration will be all the more successful if actors such as the United Nations and its family of agencies, the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the European Union and the donor community act in concert with each other, with the countries of the region and with ECOWAS.

The European Union believes regional cooperation and dialogue will only strengthen the security of West Africa. The chief responsibility for fostering security and development in West Africa lies with the West African States themselves. In this regard, the European Union calls on all the leaders in the region to engage in meaningful and constructive dialogue on the bilateral and regional levels. We believe increased coordination among United Nations operations in the region and between all the actors in West Africa can only underpin the efforts of the region to emerge from a period of prolonged and bitter conflict into a time of sustainable peace, security and development. The European Union stands ready as a willing partner to achieve this shared goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): I welcome the practical recommendations offered in the Secretary-General's report on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200). We too think it important, as pointed out in the report, that Governments in West Africa strengthen their governance and exercise their ownership in the peace-building process. It is particularly noteworthy that the Secretary-General is emphasizing that the primary responsibility for improving governance lies with each national Government in West Africa. Japan shares this view. Since the inception of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993, a collaboration achieved through ownership of African countries and partnership of the international community has been the cornerstone of Japan's policy vis-à-vis Africa. It is also the basis of our efforts to promote consolidation of peace in Africa. It is our intention to continue to assist actively, in cooperation with the international community, those countries and organizations active in West Africa that are taking a leadership role in resolving conflicts in the region.

Japan also considers that, in the process of peace-building, an approach that focuses on the protection and empowerment of individual people is extremely important. This is the "human security" approach. I

sincerely hope that the international community will take concrete action in order to ensure human security in the West African region. Japan has promoted the idea of human security in Sierra Leone by supporting reintegration of ex-combatants through the Trust Fund for Human Security.

The need for peacekeeping operations is increasing in many parts of the world. It is important to recognize, however, that there is inevitably a limit to the resources available to respond to such needs. Therefore, we believe that it is a good practical suggestion, which deserves our serious consideration, that the resources that will be saved by downsizing the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) be reallocated to the peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Japan is of the view that further efforts should be pursued to increase synergy among the missions in the region, including the possibility of the regionalization of peacekeeping operations in the longer perspective. It would also be useful to agree on a division of labour between a United Nations peacekeeping operation and a multinational force, as has taken place in Côte d'Ivoire.

As mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the idea of implementing development projects for a designated community in order to facilitate the collection of small arms and light weapons deserves serious consideration. Japan actually implemented this idea in Cambodia under the "Weapons for Development" project, and I am pleased to report that it has been producing great success.

It is important to recognize that the reintegration of ex-combatants and the reconstruction and development of communities in the post-conflict phase are essential in order to prevent the recurrence of conflicts, as is emphasized in the Secretary-General's report. In recognition of that, Japan has provided assistance totalling approximately $6.5 million for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) projects in Sierra Leone. However, in West Africa it is difficult to implement DDR activities effectively in one country without paying attention to the regional dimension, because combatants can easily cross borders. For that reason, it is essential that DDR activities also be implemented in neighbouring countries such as Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. I am pleased to announce, in this connection, that on 19 March Japan decided to extend emergency grant assistance of some $3.6 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme for child soldiers in Liberia. Japan has also decided to provide a non-project grant aid counterpart fund totalling about $2.3 million for DDR projects in Côte d'Ivoire.

Japan recognizes the gravity of the problem of child and women soldiers in West Africa, who are both social victims and a factor in the escalation of conflicts, and, as was recommended in the Secretary-General's report, would like to appeal to Member States to adopt policies against their recruitment and use for military purposes.

It is the promotion of development that is most needed in the countries of West Africa, and there should be no place on their national agenda for engaging in conflicts that consume valuable resources and bring nothing but misery to the people. Even if there is a serious difference of position between groups, it is critically important to have dialogue so as to build confidence and eventually try to solve problems peacefully. We have already seen cases where ownership is exercised by West African countries in the field of peacekeeping under the auspices of ECOWAS. We hope that the same strong sense of ownership will also be demonstrated in the areas of the promotion of governance and peace-building. Japan intends to continue to provide assistance, together with the international community, for such efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

> "The Security Council, recalling its relevant resolutions and the statements of its President, emphasizes the importance of addressing the continuing factors of instability in West Africa within a regional framework. It recognizes the need for a comprehensive and composite approach for durable solutions to the complex crises and conflicts in West Africa. Such an approach should address the root causes of conflict and consider means to promote sustainable peace and security, including development and economic revival, good governance and political reform.
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> "The Security Council takes note in this regard of the report of the Secretary-General dated 12 March 2004 (S/2004/200) and its

recommendations to address cross-border issues, in particular the plight of child soldiers and the use and proliferation of mercenaries and small arms, within the context of a regional approach. The Security Council believes action on the report should be taken as part of a wider strategy of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization in the subregion.

"The Security Council welcomes the principles set out by the African Union and NEPAD, which provide an important framework for such action. It encourages ECOWAS member States to ensure that these are fully implemented. It consequently urges ECOWAS to work closely with the United Nations system, the international financial institutions and the other international and regional organizations concerned, including the newly established African Union Peace and Security Council, as well as with interested States, in drafting a regional conflict prevention policy taking fully into account the recommendations of the recent joint United Nations and European Union mission to the region.

"The Security Council stresses the importance of the role of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa in facilitating the coordination of a coherent United Nations approach to cross-border and transnational problems in the subregion.

"The Security Council encourages the Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa to continue to hold regular meetings on coordination among the United Nations missions in the region in the interest of improved cohesion and maximum efficiency of United Nations activities in West Africa. It also encourages the greatest possible harmonization among United Nations agencies within countries of the subregion.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to encourage the United Nations missions in West Africa to share information and their logistic and administrative resources as far as possible, without impeding the satisfactory execution of their respective mandates, in order to increase their effectiveness and reduce costs.

"The Security Council expresses its intention to consider the Secretary-General's recommendations to facilitate cross-border operations and to strengthen cooperation among the United Nations missions in the region, including the possibility of 'hot pursuit' operations, joint air patrolling, shared border responsibility, the possible reinforcement of airspace monitoring and joint planning for the repatriation of foreign combatants. It looks forward to receiving as soon as possible the Secretary-General's recommendations after due consultation with the Governments concerned. It also encourages the States in the subregion to organize common patrols along their respective borders, jointly if need be with the respective United Nations peacekeeping operations.

"The Security Council invites the Secretary-General and ECOWAS to take the requisite practical decisions to improve the coordination of United Nations and ECOWAS activities in West Africa.

"The Security Council stresses the importance of a regional approach in the preparation and implementation of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programmes. To this end it invites the United Nations missions in West Africa, the Governments concerned, the appropriate financial institutions, international development agencies and donor countries to work together to harmonize individual country DDR programmes within an overarching regional strategy to design community development programmes to be implemented alongside DDR programmes, and to pay special attention to the specific needs of children in armed conflict.

"The Security Council reiterates the importance of finding durable solutions to the problem of refugees and displaced persons in the subregion and urges the States in the region to promote necessary conditions for their voluntary and safe return with the support of relevant international organizations and donor countries.

"The Security Council considers that illegal trafficking in arms poses a threat to international peace and security in the region. It, therefore, urges the ECOWAS member States to fully implement their moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons signed in Abuja

on 31 October 1998. It also invites them to study the possibility of strengthening its provisions.

"The Security Council invites the ECOWAS member States to take all necessary steps to better combat illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the region, such as the establishment of a regional register of small arms and light weapons. The Security Council calls on donor countries to help the ECOWAS member States implement these steps.

"The Security Council urges all States, in particular those in the region and those with a capacity to export arms, to ensure that arms embargoes are fully implemented in the subregion. It expresses its intention to pay close attention and remain in consultation with ECOWAS and Member States on steps to stop the illicit flows of arms to conflict zones in the region.

"The Security Council recognizes the need to address both the supply and demand side with regard to private companies selling illegally small arms or security services and invites the Governments concerned to take appropriate steps to prevent such illegal sales.

"The Security Council recalls the measures it has implemented on the illegal exploitation and trade of diamonds and timber in the subregion and encourages ECOWAS and its member States to promote transparent and sustainable exploitation of these resources.

"The Security Council encourages ECOWAS to publicly identify parties and actors who are shown to engage in illicit trafficking of small arms in the subregion and use mercenaries, and expresses its intention to consider adopting such practice in relation to the conflicts in West Africa.

"The Security Council recalls that the existence of the many illegitimate checkpoints and the practice of extortion at them in the region harms the security of civilians and is a major stumbling block to the economic development of all West Africa. It therefore invites the Governments concerned to take the necessary steps to effectively address this impediment to regional economic integration with the support of the international community.

"The Security Council calls on the ECOWAS member States to work together to agree a coherent approach to the problem of foreign combatants.

"The Security Council calls on the Mano River Union States to resume dialogue and consider holding a summit of heads of State and meetings of ministers to develop a common approach to their shared security issues and confidence-building measures.

"The Security Council considers that civil society actors, including the media, have an important role to play in crisis management and conflict prevention in the region and that their efforts in this regard deserve to be actively supported by the regional States, ECOWAS, the international community and the United Nations system. Increased support should be provided for the media to raise awareness about the plight of child soldiers, the use and proliferation of small arms and the recruitment of mercenaries.

"The Security Council welcomes the consideration being given in the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) to broadening its mandate to the cross-border issues concerning Liberia and its neighbouring countries.

"The Security Council considers reform of the security sector an essential element for peace and stability in West Africa and urgently calls on donor countries and the international financial community to coordinate their efforts to support ECOWAS, in particular its Executive Secretariat, and to assist the States in the subregion in their efforts to reform the security sector.

"The Security Council, in the context of its emphasis on the regional dimension of the problems in West Africa, expresses its intention to keep under review the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations and requests the Secretary-General to report on them at the occasion of his regular reports on the United Nations missions in the subregion."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2004/7.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. May I take this opportunity to thank all the speakers for participating in this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.